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SIPDIS

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PLEASE PASS EPA (BFREEMAN, HHUYNH)  
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TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE: RECENT IMPROVEMENTS  
AMID PERSISTENT NEED FOR RESOURCES

REF: A. ANKARA 611

[B](#). 02 ANKARA 7205

[1](#)1. Summary. Turkey's wastewater resources infrastructure serves its metropolitan populations sufficiently but is unable to provide adequate sanitation services in rural areas. Most wastewater is disposed of untreated in bodies of water. Although the number of wastewater treatment facilities in Turkey doubled in the 1990s, resources have been reduced over the past two decades and now severely limit construction of new facilities. The huge price tag that comes with infrastructure is likely to make this a troublesome chapter in Turkey's EU aspirations. End summary.

[1](#)2. Untreated wastewater is one of the most costly infrastructure elements necessary to protect human health from bacteria and viruses, tourist beaches from contamination, ecosystems from destruction, and fisheries as productive economic options. Turkey's wastewater treatment standards are consistent with those of the EU and World Bank for physical, chemical and biological parameters but outside of major cities, resources allotted to municipalities to meet those high standards fall short. The numbers are not encouraging:

-- Only 17 percent of Turkey's population is served by a public wastewater treatment system. In the U.S., 71 percent are served. The OECD average is 59 percent.

-- About 70 percent of wastewater is discharged without treatment into rivers. About a quarter of municipalities also rely on unsanitary seepage pits for domestic wastewater disposal.

-- Many municipal wastewater treatment plants are not operational due to high operating costs.

MOST POLLUTION COMES FROM AGRICULTURE

[1](#)3. The greatest source of wastewater in Turkey is agriculture, followed by domestic and industrial uses. Turkey's most severe agricultural nutrient discharge pours into the Black Sea from the Kizilirmak, Yesilirmak and Sakarya rivers in Central Anatolia. Agricultural wastewater is so severe from these rivers that the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) issued a \$12 million grant earlier this year to improve agricultural practices.

[1](#)4. Industries produce only one percent of Turkey's wastewater, according to the State Institute of Statistics (SIS). However, industrial wastewater is the most toxic, pouring chemicals such as lead, mercury, chromium, and zinc into the effluent. Only about ten percent of Turkey's industrial zones have wastewater treatment facilities.

MUNICIPALITIES SEEK FUNDING

[1](#)5. Turkey would need about \$4 billion dollars to meet its sewage infrastructure needs and another \$1.5 billion for wastewater treatment plants, based on Iller Bank numbers. The Bank of Provinces (Iller Bank), under the Ministry of Public Works, issues grants and credit for environmental infrastructure using GOT resources to cover a large portion of municipal wastewater needs. Municipalities, however, are responsible for providing infrastructure in their communities.

16. Over the past two decades, economic crises and new priorities forced the GOT to reduce its financial contribution to Iller Bank's infrastructure projects. GOT now covers only six (6) percent of project costs, dramatically down from 80 percent. Iller's tillers decrease further as many small municipalities do not re-pay their loans. The Bank's resources grew so low that at the end of 2002, Iller could not fund tender-ready plans for 270 sewer systems, wastewater treatment plants and sea-outfalls. Several greater municipalities found support for their projects from international sources, but of 2,300 needed projects, 1,500 remain unfunded.

#### EU RELEVANCE -----

17. Wastewater infrastructure increased in relevance when Turkey joined the European Customs Union Agreement in 1995 as it will again during EU accession discussions. Their high price tags have made the environmental components of the EU acquis among the most difficult for candidate countries. As part of Turkey's pre-accession strategy, the EU has provided funds to identify potential gaps between EU and Turkish legislation, but those funds do not cover infrastructure needs.

#### IMPROVEMENT IN THE CITIES -----

18. Most wastewater infrastructure is concentrated in heavily populated areas with evident improvement over the past decade. SIS estimates that from 1994-98, the percentage of treated wastewater tripled to nearly 30 percent. The number of wastewater treatment plants doubled from 41 to 81 and the population served by sewer systems increased to 60 percent.

19. Major cities have recently invested significantly and effectively in wastewater infrastructure. Ankara constructed a \$170-million wastewater treatment plant in 1997 and opened new sewer system that serves 98 percent of its population. A series of projects in Istanbul has ended direct wastewater discharge into the Golden Horn (Halic) and visibly cleaned that central body of water. Izmir's self-funded, comprehensive \$80-million "Dream Channel Project" begun in 1999 has won broad public acclaim for effectively cleaning up Izmir Gulf. The Mediterranean tourist center of Antalya treats and discharges all wastewater at-sea and requires all treatment centers to maintain laboratories for continual testing of effluent and water supply.

110. Even in the rural Southeast, Diyarbakir, with 30 percent of the region's population, has received funding from German banks and will open a new wastewater treatment plant later this year. However, smaller communities in the region and throughout rural Turkey do not receive adequate financial support and are unable to provide sufficient wastewater infrastructure for their residents.

111. Comment. The need for strengthening wastewater infrastructure may make Turkey's municipalities and industrial plants coveted customers of companies selling pollution control equipment. However, financing will remain a significant burden until sanitation infrastructure places higher among many competing priorities.

PEARSON